

RECORD OF '68 DISCUSSION

The CIA Has 'Cover' Problems, Too

By JAMES DOYLE
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Early in 1968 a group including former officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department sat down after dinner at the Harold Pratt House, on New York's Avenue, to discuss some of the CIA's problems.

A record of their conversation shows that the particular concern of the group that night was how to provide a deeper cover for Americans gathering information by using non-governmental organizations as fronts.

The participants were members and guests of the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations, men who seem to direct foreign policy from within and without the government on a permanent basis, and publishers of "Foreign Affairs," the quarterly bible of American diplomacy.

A record of the discussion at the council's headquarters on that evening, Jan. 8, 1968, has been circulated to some newspapers by a group of self-styled radical scholars based in Cambridge.

It portrays with some new details the structure and the style of the American intelligence community. The document is timely in the wake of events last week in London, where 105 members of the Soviet community there, including employees from the Soviet embassy, trade delegation, tourist agency, Moscow Narodny Bank and Aeroflot Airline were uncovered as espionage agents, and banned from the country without replacements.

It was a fear of just such an incident, apparently, that dominated the conversation at Pratt House that night.

The U.S. "employees" whose cover constantly is endangered, the participants felt, are those who work in the American Embassies, trade delegations, and other U.S. agencies in countries around the world.

Richard Bissell, a former deputy director of the CIA who left the agency after the Bay of Pigs debacle, led the discussion. According to the record made available to The Star, he told his council colleagues

agents "need to operate under deeper cover."

Bissell recounted ruefully the uproar over the CIA's exposed funding of the National Student Association's overseas activities and said, "The CIA interface with various private groups, including business and student groups, must be remedied."

He noted that the problems of American spies overseas "is frequently a problem of the State Department."

"It tends to be true that local allies find themselves dealing always with an American and an official American—since the cover is almost invariably as a U.S. government employee," Bissell is reported to have said.

"There are powerful reasons for this practice, and it will always be desirable to have some CIA personnel housed in the embassy compound, if only for local 'command post' and communications requirements.

"Nonetheless, it is possible and desirable, although difficult and time-consuming, to build overseas an apparatus of unofficial cover," Bissell is quoted as saying.

"This would require the use or creation of private organizations, many of the personnel of which would be non-U.S. nationals, with freer entry into the local society and less implication for the official U.S. posture."

Use Non-Americans

Bissell said that the United States needed to increase its use of non-Americans for espionage "with an effort at indoctrination

and training: they should be encouraged to develop a second loyalty, more or less comparable to that of the American staff."

He added that as intelligence efforts shifted more toward Latin America, Asia and Africa, "the conduct of U.S. nationals is likely to be increasingly circumscribed. The primary change recommended would be to build up a system of unofficial cover. . . . The CIA might be able to make use of non-nationals as 'career agents', that is with a status midway between that for the classical agent used in a

and that of a staff member involved through his career in many operations, and well informed of the agency's capabilities."

An unidentified former State Department official responded to Bissell that he agreed with the need to change covers, noting that "the initial agreement between the agency and State was intended to be 'temporary', but nothing endures like the ephemeral."

Another participant noted that very little attention was paid to revelations of the CIA's use of supposedly independent operations such as "Radio Free Europe," he added, "One might conclude that the public is not likely to be concerned by the penetration of overseas institutions, at least not nearly so much as by the penetration of U.S. institutions."

This participant was quoted as saying, "The public doesn't think it's right; they don't know where it ends; they take a look at their neighbors." Then he asked whether "this suggested expansion in use of private institutions should include those in the United States, or U.S. institutions operating overseas?"

In response, clear distinctions were reportedly made between operating in the United States and abroad, and the suggestion was made by Bissell, "One might want CIA to expand its use of private U.S. corporations, but for objectives outside the United States."

Fund Demands Rise

The record of the discussion did not link comment and author, but did give a general identification of the men present. There also was a diligent removal from the authorized reporter's transcript of all specific references of agents, incidents and the like, with one noticeable lapse.

In a discussion of the effect of revelations that the CIA was financing U.S. labor union activities abroad, it was noted that these disclosures had simply increased the demand for such funds from overseas labor groups.

British Guiana labor unions

"were supported through CIA conduits, but now they ask for more assistance than before. So, our expectations to the contrary, there has been no damage."

Those present and taking part in the discussion included men who have journeyed back and forth between government and corporate work, most of whom have remained near the center of the foreign policy establishment.

They included Bissell, now an executive with United Aircraft Corp. in Hartford, Conn.; former Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon; former CIA director Allen Dulles; Robert Amory Jr., a former deputy director of the CIA; Meyer Bernstein, director of international affairs for the United Steelworkers of America; columnist Joseph Kraft; former White House aide Theodore Sorensen of Kennedy and Johnson days; and Philip Quigg, recently resigned as managing editor of Foreign Affairs.

Facsimile copies of the discussion summary have been circulated by "The Africa Research Group," a dozen young scholars in Cambridge who take a radical dissenting view of U.S. foreign policy.

Reached at his home, Bissell confirmed the authenticity of the document.

He noted that in the discussion that night in New York, he had begun by saying that agent espionage was the least valuable of three main CIA missions, behind reconnaissance and electronic intelligence, the two areas where most CIA money is spent. FOIA b3 b6